

Remarks and Arguments

Claims 1-3, 6-19, 22-35 and 38-47 have been presented for examination. Claims 1, 17 and 33 have been amended. Claims 39, 46 and 47 have been canceled.

Claims 9, 11-13 and 15-16 have been objected to because each claim incorrectly refers to steps in claim 1 due to amendments made in claim 1. In response, claims 9, 11-13 and 15-16 have been amended to correctly refer to the paragraphs referenced in claim 1 by letter designators.

Claims 1-3, 6-19, 22-35 and 38-47 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,884,032 (Bateman, previously referenced) in view of SafeHarbor Customer Support Services/Products as evidenced by SafeHarbor.com web pages first published in 2000 (SafeHarbor.) The examiner comments that the Bateman reference discloses the invention substantially as claimed, but does not expressly teach that collection of user background information is initiated upon a request from an organization or that use of the system is allowed only to users who are members of the organization as claimed, but asserts that "membership" is irrelevant since the field of use does not change the operation of the system.

The examiner further asserts that the SafeHarbor reference discloses the invention substantially as claimed including an on-line method and system for managing customer support services which is initiated by a request from an organization. The examiner concludes that it would have been obvious to combine the teaching of Bateman and SafeHarbor because both systems deal with analogous art.

A previously mentioned, the present invention provides workplace services and products to an organization, which does not have these products and services available internally, on a cost effective basis. This is accomplished by a three part system comprising workplace resource office personnel who gather background information, a knowledge management database that is populated before users contact the specialists and specialist(s) that answer specific questions based on information from the knowledge management database. It is important that the workplace resource office personnel understand the operation of the system and know what information is required, but they are not the specialists who answer questions. If a specialist has to gather background information, the resulting service will not be cost effective. Thus, the

present system differs from the normal provision of services by doctors and lawyers because in the normal case, a user visits the professional directly and the professional questions the user in order to obtain the information relevant to answering the user's questions. The normal way of obtaining professional advice results in costs of hundreds of dollars per hour whereas the invention results in costs of hundreds of dollars per year.

It is also important that people be used to obtain the correct background information because a machine can never know which information is required and cannot follow-up when incorrect or confusing information is initially obtained. If a pre-designed form is used to collect background information, as is typical with CRM systems, as previously mentioned, a customer with a specific question may not know the information that is required to answer that question or may not have access to that information (the information may only be accessible to selected people in the organization.) Thus, the customer cannot provide the information that is required. Thus, the inventive system differs from the conventional CRM system as illustrated by the SafeHarbor system.

The claims have been amended to specifically point out this difference. For example, amended claim 1 recites, in lines 4-7, "using personnel in a workplace resources office who are familiar with the workplace services, but are not the specialists to contact the plurality of users and to obtain background information..." "store the background information ... in the database before a user contacts a specialist...(lines 12-15)" and "establishing a communication session between one of the plurality of users and a specialist who is not one of the workplace resources office personnel in order that the specialist can provide assistance on a specific workplace issue.. (lines 15-17.)

The examiner asserts that the Bateman reference discloses basing specific advice on user information collected both prior to and during a live support session. As support, the examiner indicates that Bateman discloses that the user and the help desk agent can simultaneously view a web page using a CLID to identify the user and the web page. However, it is clear that this information is obtained mechanically and would not be sufficient to answer a specific question. Thus, in the Bateman system it falls to the help desk agent (specialist) to obtain most if not all of the information necessary to

answer a specific question. The result is cost inefficiency. Bateman does not disclose using personnel in a workplace resources office who are familiar with the workplace services, but are not the specialists to contact the plurality of users and to obtain background information and storing that information in the database before a user contacts a specialist as recited in claim 1.

The examiner further asserts that the Bateman reference shows creating a database and connecting the workplace resources office (the specialists) to the database via a network and establishing a connection between a user and a specialist. However, claim 1 recites that the specialist is not one of the workplace resource office personnel and that both the workplace resources office and the specialist are connected to the database and can enter and retrieve information. The Bateman reference discloses that only the help desk agents (specialists) are connected to the database and can enter and retrieve information.

The SafeHarbor reference discloses a typical CRM system. The purpose of this system is to attempt to answer any questions a user might have "mechanically", or by using a computer, instead of a live person. The purpose is to conserve the time of the live person as this is expensive. See SafeHarbor page 32 "Goodbye Call Center. Hello Contact Center." The users are offered a selection of automated services including a KnowledgeBASE, BrowserBase, KnowledgeCHART and ServiceSam, but if a user wants a very specific question answered, he or she stills needs to contact real person and provide the necessary information before the question can be answered. In a system such as the SafeHarbor system it is not possible to contact a user organization and obtain the information necessary to answer specific questions, because in these systems, the customer cannot be identified until he or she contacts the help system for advice. As with the Bateman system, the SafeHarbor system does not disclose using personnel in a workplace resources office who are familiar with the workplace services, but are not the specialists to contact the plurality of users and to obtain background information and storing that information in the database before a user contacts a specialist as recited in claim 1. Further, the SafeHarbor reference discloses that only the help technicians (specialists) are connected to the database and can enter and

retrieve information not both the workplace resources office personnel and the specialists as recited in claim 1.

The Bateman reference and the SafeHarbor reference are essentially the same in their basic overall operation. Once the machine-based attempts to answer a user questions disclosed in the SafeHarbor reference are removed, both systems operate in the same manner: the specialist receives a user contact, obtains the required information from the user and then answers the user's question. Thus, the combination of these two references cannot change this basic operation and suggest a new different manner of operation such as that of the present invention. Bateman and SafeHarbor disclose a method of providing workplace services that operates in essentially the same way that professional services have been provided for years, as discussed above, with the exception that no office visit is necessary, a telephone is used instead. The result is that services are provided in a cost-inefficient matter. Consequently, amended claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the cited combination of references.

Claims 2-16 are dependent upon, either directly or indirectly, on amended claim 1 and incorporate the limitations thereof. Therefore, they also distinguish over the cited references in the same manner as amended claim 1.

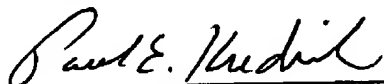
Claims 17 and 33 have been amended in the same manner as amended claim 1. Consequently, these claims distinguish over the references in the same manner as amended claim 1. Claims 18-32 are dependent upon, either directly or indirectly, on amended claim 17 and incorporate the limitations thereof. Therefore, they also distinguish over the cited references in the same manner as amended claim 17.

Claims 34-38 are dependent upon, either directly or indirectly, on amended claim 33 and incorporate the limitations thereof. Therefore, they also distinguish over the cited references in the same manner as amended claim 33.

In light of the forgoing amendments and remarks, this application is now believed in condition for allowance and a notice of allowance is earnestly solicited. If the

examiner has any further questions regarding this amendment, he is invited to call applicants' attorney at the number listed below. The examiner is hereby authorized to charge any fees or direct any payment under 37 C.F.R. §§1.17, 1.16 to Deposit Account number 02-3038.

Respectfully submitted



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